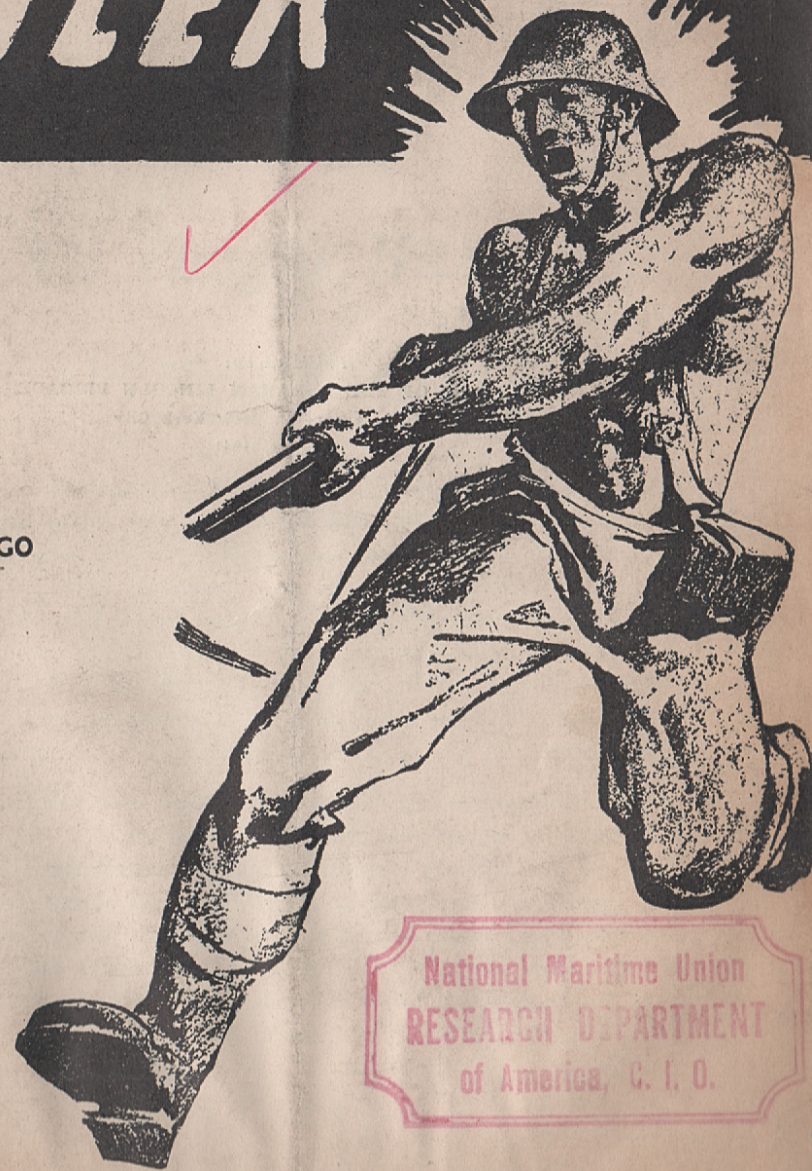


# WE FOUGHT HITLER

By  
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5 cents



National Maritime Union  
RESEARCH DEPARTMENT  
of America, C. I. O.

VETERANS OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE



Published by:  
VETERANS OF THE ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE  
77 Fifth Avenue New York City  
August, 1941

## *We Fought Hitler*

“... drive the fascists into the sea.”

“Ready! Aim! Fire!”

In the peaceful, sun-drenched hamlet of Madrigueras in the La Mancha region of Spain, for the first time in my life I held, aimed, and fired an army rifle. For years I had fought for peace, only to find myself in 1937 preparing for war. The inescapable logic of events had made it necessary that peaceful men and women take up arms to defend themselves against fascism—against war. The Lincoln Veterans had gone to Spain not only to help the Spanish people but *primarily to defend America from fascism*. We knew that a victory for fascism in Spain meant its spread throughout Europe and encouragement to the fifth columnists of the American nations.

In Spain, the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, part of the thousands of international volunteers that formed the International Brigades of Republican Spain, solemnly swore that they would never, never stop fighting, by whatever appropriate means, against Hitlerism or any brand of fascism that might exist. One of our training officers, a leathery-faced Englishman who had seen more than twenty years of active service in two armies, said to us, “This war will never end, as did the first World War, around a conference table. The fascists either will be driven into the sea or . . . .”

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He could not finish, and one of our company very quietly suggested, "... or we'll keep on fighting until we do drive all the fascists into the sea."

Since Spain, Hitlerism has gone on to win many more battles: Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Denmark, France, Hungary, Roumania, Bulgaria, Greece. However, every soldier knows that to win battles alone does not signify ultimate victory. The forces led by General George Washington did not win a single important engagement until the last months of a war that lasted seven years. Napoleon did not lose a single battle until his retreat from Moscow and his utter annihilation at Waterloo. In a futile, desperate effort to attain the desired goal, Hitler attacked the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

The unprovoked attack against that powerful neutral is very real evidence that this is a war of fascism against *all* peoples. The enslavement of the two hundred millions of peoples of the U.S.S.R. and the spoliation of its vast resources by the monster, Hitler, could serve as a basis for the enslavement of the world. The recently concluded Soviet-British pact of mutual assistance reveals the main aim of the Allies to be the preservation of national independence and of human dignity from Nazi conquest and barbarism.

Now, today, is the time for all anti-fascists to seize the opportunity to defeat the modern vandals, to drive the Hitlers, Mussolinis, Francos, Petains, Hoovers and Coughlins into the sea.

## Morale And Armaments

More important than anything else to people defending their lives, much more important than weapons—is morale. Today the military experts are 'surprised' at the strong morale of the Red Army despite the terrific Hitlerian blitz. In Spain an unprepared people were able to fight on for thirty-two months because they knew what they were fighting for. It should have been no surprise to anyone who realized that the Soviet peoples, too, know for what they are fighting. Lieutenant Commander Seely of the U. S. Navy (Retired) in the July issue of the service publication "Navy News" put it succinctly in writing that he believes "that the Russian people are united to defend themselves against fascism as no great nation has ever

been united to defend itself against anything . . . against this unity of purpose it is inconceivable that Hitler and his allies can overcome Russia's might." It is the explanation, too, for the splendid spirit evidenced by the brave British people whose morale has not been shaken despite months and months of the most destructive bombings.

The great confidence which the Lincoln Veterans invest in the Soviet Army was built through our experience in fighting alongside a people who fought bravely because they had something to fight for; it was built also through our experience in using Soviet weapons and tactics. The great majority of all the weapons used in Spain was Soviet manufactured. Stamped on that rifle I used was the mark "U.S.S.R. 1936." We tested the superior quality of the Soviet heavy Maxim-type machine gun in action. The simplicity of its mechanism (any soldier can learn in a day's time how to field strip it; any trained machine gunner can strip it completely within 100 seconds) in no way detracts from its quality; I have seen its deadly hail of 600 bullets per minute mowing down wave after wave of attacking enemy infantry. The members of the Tom Mooney machine gun company can tell you of their respect and admiration for this machine gun; in one of the daily battles at Jarama it was a Soviet gun that saved the day after all others had jammed or gone haywire.

The Soviet anti-tank gun, of which we are reading so much these past few weeks, likewise a marvel of simplicity, is a marvel of accuracy and dependability. It can be fired with the highest degree of accuracy and effectiveness on an almost flat trajectory for about three kilometers and has a maximum range of about seven kilometers. It can be fired with such rapidity that during a particularly dangerous moment during the Aragon retreats one anti-tank gun was put to the unusual use of dispersing a heavy enemy cavalry attack!

The quality of the Soviet planes was proved in Spain to the amazement of the 'experts' and to the joy of the Spanish people. For days on end Madrid had been bombed incessantly. But one day the famous Chatos (snub-nosed monoplanes that have been described as being "a pair of wings and several machine guns") and the equally famous pursuit planes called the Moscas ("Flies") appeared over the Madrid skies. While the Madrilenos cheered themselves hoarse and danced through the streets, the newly-trained Spanish pilots chased off all the enemy planes. They appeared in later days only in



overwhelmingly superior numbers. The fascist enemy did not dare meet the Soviet planes in the air unless they out-numbered them by as least four to one—and then they were hard put to it.

The Loyalists benefited also in learning tactics from Red Army officers. The recrossing of the Ebro by the International Brigades and the Spanish Republican Army has been described in all military journals as one of the most brilliant exploits in all military history. The splendidly coordinated action of only four battalions of men of the 15th Brigade (a Spanish, the English, the Canadian, and the Abraham Lincoln Battalions) enabled us in half a day's fighting to seize some strongly fortified hills outside Segura de los Banos with a very minimum of casualties.

The effectiveness of guerrilla activities in Spain was enhanced by the instruction of Soviet officers. Captain William Aalto and Lieutenant Irving Goff, two Americans who still live to tell the tale, were guerrillas for almost two years and the knowledge of their deeds resounded on every Spaniard's tongue.

Several Soviet advisers were attached to each guerrilla outfit from the very first days of the organization of those groups. The training afforded these picked men, in the guerrilla schools and through months of practice, had its permanent effect as manifested by the guerrillas operating today in Asturias, Galicia, Extremadura, Andalucia, Aragon, and Catalonia.

The excellent quality of Soviet material is a known factor to us. Several weeks of the bloodiest battles on the Eastern front is proving to millions what we learned from first-hand experience, to the discomfiture of Herr Lindbergh and other military 'experts.' Today the Red Army is reproving to the world, as we did at Guadalajara, Brunete, Jarama, Belchite, Quinto, Segura de los Banos, the Ebro, and other great battles in Spain, that the Nazis are *not* invincible.

## All-Out Aid To Great Britain, Soviet Union

"Letting George do it" has never been an essential characteristic of the American people. That the hope and faith of millions rest on the Red Army in no way will aid its soldiers or those of Great Britain to achieve a military defeat over Hitler one whit sooner. The Lincoln Veterans were not content

to sit as interested spectators in 1936-39 and we do not propose to do so now.

For this is everyone's fight. And it cannot be a successful one by offering as a sacrifice one army after another or by splitting into a dozen isolated energies what should be a tremendous international united anti-fascist front with one common aim—the military defeat of Hitler.

This is not the time for hair-splitting debates, for arm-chair philosophy, for after-dinner speculations, for "I told you so" recriminations. It is in the realm of actuality, not theory, to speak of the enslavement of tens of millions of Europeans. Americans cannot accept casually the colossal, almost unbelievable fact, confronting us like a never-ending horrible nightmare, that more than two million lives have already been lost, within a very few weeks, on the Eastern front.

Let us ponder that fact very soberly. Two million youths slaughtered in a few weeks! Wrecked lives of millions of parents, wives, sweethearts, children! Two *million* youths! This should not be considered only as a big *number*. Fifteen hundred of our comrades lie buried in Spanish soil. To us us they are not numbers but living voices, men with whom we joked, ate, slept. They were sons, brothers, fathers, husbands; Dave Doran, Milt Herndon, Joe Streisand, Dave Reiss, Joe Stone, Malcolm Chisolm, Gene Bronstein, Paul Block, 'Butch' Entin and all the others—they were our comrades, fifteen hundred of them whom we knew and loved. And now in England and in the Soviet Union, and in Germany and in the occupied regions, men and women whom we don't know as well but whose deaths we feel as keenly are being slaughtered by the mechanized forces unleashed by a maniac and his confreres who would rule the world.

Is this a localized battle as certain people said of Spain? Is this a crusade against Communism as certain people said of Spain? Those people who may have been fooled a few years ago must surely have their eyes open now. As in the instance of Spain, the defense of Great Britain and of the Soviet Union is the defense of *all* progressive mankind.

Until June 22nd, the U.S.S.R. constituted a *six thousand mile bulwark* against any territorial encroachment of the U. S. A. by the Nazis. A successful Nazi conquest of that vast region, coupled with the exploitation of its limitless resources, would place the Nazis within very practical strik-



ing distance of the American continent. Even before territorial invasion would come a terrible wave of fascist terror unleashed by our native reactionaries—our native fascists, and by the Nazi agents already in every country of this continent. Ersatz instead of bread; forced labor; trade unions smashed; Jews destroyed en masse; the Negro people trampled underfoot worse than anything comparable in the slave days; frightful persecution of the foreign born and of every minority people; government of, by and for the people only an historical memory—the unspeakable horrors of fascist dictatorship would be visited upon the whole American continent.

The British people, as Churchill so clearly enunciated, know full well that invasion of Britain would follow a Nazi success over the U.S.S.R. It is not too difficult to visualize also an invasion of America under such circumstances. To say that to defend Great Britain and the U.S.S.R. is to defend the U.S.A. is no figurative statement; it is based on cold facts.

Those who would lend aid only to Great Britain and not also to the Soviet peoples are engaging in the most dangerous of splitting maneuvers. Great Britain's mutual defense pact with the Soviet Union and the pledges recently made by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill is trenchant evidence that talk of aiding one and not the other is only an attempt to divide the unity of all peoples who are willing to fight against Hitlerism. *The defense of both means the defense of America.*

We, like most Americans, are in complete accord with President Roosevelt's promises of aid to the Soviet Union. We ask only that the American people see to it that the promise be translated quickly into deeds.

We Lincoln Veterans have the utmost confidence in the ultimate victory of the Allies. But not for one moment do we underestimate the strength of the Nazi Army. The Soviets and Great Britain cannot win an *easy* victory. Every month, every day of delay permits the Munichmen to nurse their contemptible double-crossing schemes. Every month, every day of delay means additional frightful cost of lives and cities laid waste. Hitlerism must be destroyed, not eventually, but *as quickly as possible*. The great suffering now being visited upon all the peoples of Europe and Asia must be ended *as quickly as possible*. Peace must come to Europe and to China and Japan *as quickly as possible*. To effect this, aid, all-out aid in every conceivable form must be extended to Great Britain and above all to the U.S.S.R. whose soil constitutes the principal battleground against fascism.

To this end, the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade pledge all their resources. We went to Spain to defend America and we stand ready, if need be, to march again.

## Fifth Columnism—In Spain and America

The period of the epoch-making American Revolutionary War saw its Benedict Arnolds and Tories; Jeffersonian Democracy during the War of 1812 was faced with the treachery of the Federalists, who, like the Tories, remain only as historical blots on the glorious records of those progressives like Franklin and Jefferson whose ideals still live.

Today, in the universal struggle against fascism, we are confronted by the Quislings. We warn the American people against ex-Col. Charles A. Lindbergh, Herbert Hoover, Senator Wheeler, Norman Thomas and their like for they are the Quislings of America. As did Quisling in Norway, and Laval and Petain in France, the Lindbergh-Hoover outfit would bring Hitlerism to America. It is for that reason that they are so vehemently opposed to aid to England and the U.S.S.R. Did not the Nazi-decorated aviator himself recently declare that he would rather see Hitler win! Lindbergh is not interested in defending Britain or the U.S.S.R. precisely because he is not interested in defending America against Hitlerism.

Good generalship in this campaign to defend America demands that the main blow be aimed at the appeasers, the Munichmen, the Quislings of America—at the Lindbergh-Hoover-Thomas America First Committee. (America First After the Nazis!)

The wonderful La Pasionaria, the heroine loved by all Spain, said, "Fascism is brave when the democracies are cowardly." Yes, the Quislings, the Lindberghs, the despicable Munichmen plotted the sell-out of Spain while Barcelona was in flames, and plot the sell-out of their own countries while Coventry, London, Leningrad and Moscow are bombed. Fortunately the U.S.S.R. cleaned out its fifth columnists and became immeasurably strengthened thereby; the execution of the Tukhachevskys and Bukharinites and Trotskyites was the Soviets' measure of strength, not weakness.

We have seen the bombings of cities in Spain. For three days in March the fascist swine poured ton upon ton of high explosive and incendiary



bombs on defenseless Barcelona. We saw the corpses of women and children by the hundreds. They were the targets of the deadly Capronis and Junkers whose pilots in this way demonstrated their "defense of Christianity against Bolshevism." March 16th, 17th, 18th, 1938—Barcelona—28,000 casualties. A gnarled old peasant, supporting on his knees the head of his dead son, in a voice full of emotion and hatred, cried out to the Junkers overhead, "*La culpa es de Chamberlain.*" (It is Chamberlain's fault.)

While this was going on, while the Spanish people fought with their hands against the tanks and planes of the fascist enemy, the Munichmen said that the war in Spain was a "private feud" of the Spaniards. When the Spanish envoys made their final desperate pleas before the League of Nations, the Cliveden set, the Petains and Lavals, the Hoovers and Lindberghs shrugged their shoulders in complete indifference, and behind our backs dickered with Hitler and Mussolini on how best to sell out Republican Spain. Only now are the American people realizing that that war was not a private feud and that while the Spaniards fought for national independence, the Lincoln Battalion was fighting to defend America and the International Volunteers constituted an international front against Hitlerism.

The traitor General Mola said that he would launch "four columns" against Madrid, but that only the "fifth column" would begin the offensive. The people of Spain, ready to make any sacrifice, withstood the onslaught of the external enemy, the four columns. We saw the dauntless Asturian '*dinamiteros*,' with nothing but lit cigars clenched between their teeth and sticks of fused dynamite in their hands, fearlessly meet the savage onrush of Italian tanks before Madrid; we have fought side by side with the Spanish peasants whose matchless courage calls forth the admiration of everyone. But it was the fifth column of Casados, Besteiros, Nins and Munichmen who sold Spain out. Casado, in the same way that Lindbergh promises the Americans, promised peace to the Spanish people, an end to the horrors of war, an end to the killing of Spanish sons and husbands and children. Peace? From the hour Casado and Besteiro handed Madrid over to the fascists on that unforgettable day in March, 1939, the Spanish people have known only death and destruction. Since that day more than *five hundred thousand* Spaniards have been butchered by Franco, and more than *two million* suffer the hell of concentration camps and forced labor gangs. *Against the fifth column in America—the Lindberghs, and all those who oppose effective aid*

*to all the peoples embattled against Fascism—against these internal enemies the American people must launch their offensive.*

## Democratize The Army

The Lincoln Veterans did not stop fighting fascism on leaving Spain. We did not and do not forget those Internationals who still are in Spanish, French and African concentration camps, tortured but not broken. Among other activities, picket lines and demonstrations before the Vichy and Franco consulates netted us the praise of Americans and arrests by city governments. National Commander Milton Wolff was arrested for picketing the French Consulate and demanding the cessation of the barbaric tortures against the anti-fascist International Volunteers in the concentration camps. Ramon Durem, for his sturdy fight against the fascist-like Yorty Committee of California, the counterpart of New York's Rapp-Coudert Committee, was imprisoned and was recently released only through the pressure exacted by hundreds of thousands of trade unionists and progressive Californians. Pennsylvania jails house several more Lincoln Veterans who were guilty (sic!) of soliciting signatures to a nominating petition of the Communist Party. One of the greatest anti-fascist fighters, one whom we are proud to have inducted as an honorary member of our Brigade, Earl Browder, is serving an outrageously severe prison sentence on the flimsiest of charges. We have made him an honorary member because he was foremost in helping to build the people's unity during the Spanish struggle; and we take part in the campaign to secure his immediate freedom because we know that Earl Browder can effect even greater services now in building the anti-fascist unity of all the American people.

We warn the American people against the traitors in the highest ranks of the American Army. To ensure a genuine fight against Hitlerism, we demand the ousting of those officers who are fascist-minded; we demand the democratization of the Army. Wipe out the disgraceful stigma of Jim-Crow in the Army! What a travesty on the concept of democracy to segregate one anti-fascist soldier from another because of the color of his skin! Open up the ranks of the officers to all who qualify through merit and merit alone! Admit to the officer training schools all who qualify regardless of race, creed, color or social origin!



The Spanish Republican Army was a genuine people's army. Just as the Government had extended, *during the war*, democratic rights in every form to all the people, so was the army democratized. Humble origin or previous station in life was no barrier to attaining rank. The names of Lister (the stone-cutter), Campesino the farmer), Modesto (the carpenter) are known to everyone. And in our own brigade, Johnny Gates, who began as a private on the Cordoba front consistently rose in rank so that at the age of twenty-four he was a Lieutenant Colonel, highest ranking officer of the Lincolns. Milt Wolff, through the courage and clear-headedness he displayed through a half dozen gruelling campaigns from Brunete on, became a Major, Commander of the Lincoln-Washington Battalion. A Negro, Oliver Law, killed in action, was a Battalion Commander; Aaron Johnson, Walter Garland and other Negroes became high ranking officers. The Negro was treated on an absolute level of equality in that people's army.

One of the most significant acts of the Government in democratizing the army was the establishment of the *milicia de cultura* (cultural militia.) Think of it! In time of war, at the very moment when all of Spain was engaged in a life and death struggle with the most ruthless of enemies, an army of cultural militamen set about educating the peasant and workingman in uniform. The campaign to eradicate illiteracy (although this campaign was not limited to the teaching of reading and writing but included other subjects such as geography, arithmetic, political economy, etc.) went on not only in training camps but in the very front lines! I recall very vividly the young Spanish soldier who, on concluding the literacy course and finding himself able to read the newspapers, exclaimed aloud, "Now I am a man! Now I know how to read and write! With lesson book in one hand and rifle in the other, as though I were mounting guard over my right to education, I shall smash the fascist invaders of my land."

As a direct consequence of the democratization of the Spanish Army, the morale of the men, of the International Volunteers, was so great and the Army was so strengthened thereby that Republican Spain was able to fight against the overwhelming odds of the "Unholy Three" for almost three years. And the morale that was built so firmly then still is not crushed, evidenced by the guerrilla warfare that goes on to this day against the hated butcher Franco.

Guerrilla warfare requires a high degree of political awareness of the par-

ticipants. It means that the Government must have the utmost confidence in the people before giving them arms. The Spanish people had the morale, the courage, and warranted that confidence; the fascists couldn't possibly have utilized guerrilla tactics. The Chinese people today have that morale. And the Soviet peoples are making guerrilla warfare so effective at this very writing exactly because they have the morale, the willingness to die on their feet rather than live on their knees. The lesson for the American people in this respect is quite plain.

## Not Sympathy But Action

The cause of Spain, it was said, was the cause of all progressive mankind. The Soviet Union, alone of all the great nations, realized that and gave not only military but political and economic aid to the young Spanish Republic. In the League of Nations Spain had at least one strong voice consistently raised in her behalf. The people of the Soviet Union and its Government contributed tons and tons of clothing, medicinal supplies and food to Spain. The people of Spain knew that it was the U.S.S.R. which was their only friend among all the great powers, and voiced its appreciation in many dramatic ways. Every tall member of the International Brigades, if not sometimes considered as "Americano," was affectionately called "Ruso"; against protestations and denials the Spaniard would nod slyly and say, "*Bueno; ya entiendo. Eres Mejicano.*" (All right; now I understand. You are a Mexican!) When the Soviet motorship "Komsomol," loaded with food, steamed into the Barcelona harbor, I think every man, woman and child was down on the docks to greet her and her sailors. A tremendously enthusiastic, spontaneous demonstration, paralleling only the most popular of Fiestas, swept the entire city for the several days that the Komsomol stayed in port. When months later it was announced that the Komsomol had been sunk by an Italian submarine, the multitudes, grief-stricken, wept publicly.

The cause of Spain was the cause of all progressive mankind. Not everyone realized that then. Much that was muddled for some people then, is quite apparent today. The great majority of the British people are realizing, and the great majority of the American people must come to realize, and very quickly too, that the defense of the U.S.S.R. and of Great Britain is the cause of *all* progressive mankind.



The hearts of millions of Americans quickened in sympathy with the three thousand American youths who fought in Spain. That sympathy did not lift the criminal embargo against Spain. Such an embargo must not be repeated. Lease-Lend provisions must be extended to the Soviet Union and in general more aid should be sent more quickly to the Allies.

What is called for now is not sympathy but action. In 1936 and 1937 International Brigades of thousands of men from more than thirty nations constituted the token of universal solidarity with the cause of Spain. Now in 1941, one hundred and thirty millions of Americans must form a nation-wide front, in alliance with *all* the peoples embattled against fascism, to take *decisive, immediate action* so that "Government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth."

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New York City



Dear Reader:

Al Prago, the author of this pamphlet, put his finger on it when he wrote, "What is called for now is not sympathy but action." The seriously wounded men of our Brigade, the men released from the concentration camps of France and Spain—these men who still are in hospitals, who still are under medical care—ask not for sympathy but action. They ask for the opportunity to get back into the anti-Nazi fight in this most crucial period.

Cort Bevinse, although still using crutches, found his place on a picket line before the Vichy Consulate. Soon Cort's smashed ankle will be operated upon for the ninth time. Only a short time ago the infection in Norman Perlman's leg necessitated amputation below the knee. Morris Dash is about to reenter the hospital to undergo an extremely serious hip operation which will confine him in a cast for about one year.

These are but a few of many cases we might cite of men whose anti-fascist courage and spirit have not been dampened by physical hurt and who are anxious to bring their rich experiences to the American people.

Help rehabilitate the men who were among the first Americans to fight Hitler. Contribute your bit so that these men, who have undergone years of untold suffering, will be enabled to return quickly to the anti-fascist ranks.

Salud,

Irving Fajans, Executive Secretary

Please send your money order or check to:

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